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Safety Belt Usage in Illinois

June 2002 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent belt survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2002 on both high volume state highways and low volume local roads and residential streets. The survey design was based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's requirements and had four characteristics.

1. The survey was conducted between 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. when the light was adequate for observation.
2. The survey observations were restricted to front seat occupants (drivers and passengers) of cars, sport utility vehicles, taxis, vans and pickup trucks.
3. Only the use of a shoulder harness was observed since vehicles passed an observation point without stopping.
4. The survey sites included all interstate highways and freeways and a random sample of residential streets within selected areas.

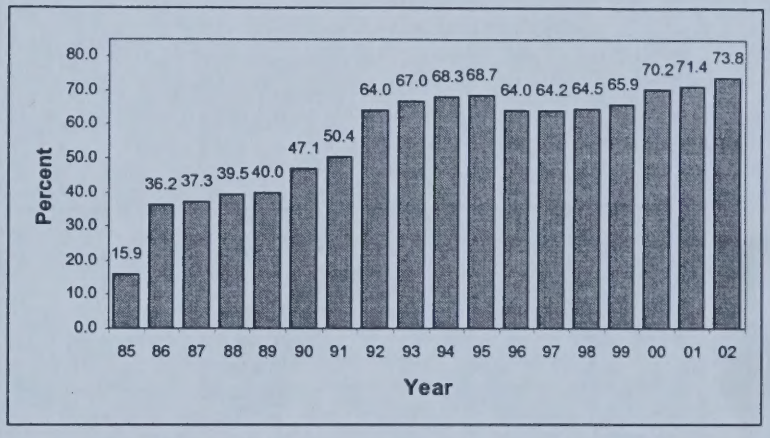
There were 118,375 front seat occupants at 258 locations statewide observed in this survey. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), January 1994.

Historical Trends

Illinois' first safety belt survey was conducted in April 1985, prior to the safety belt law becoming effective on July 1, 1985. The data from the first survey became a base from which to measure the success of Illinois' efforts to educate citizens about the benefits of using safety belts.

The base line (April 1985) occupant restraint usage rate for all front seat occupants (drivers and passengers) observed in Illinois was 15.9 percent. During the first twelve months after the safety belt law became effective, the observed usage rate increased to 36.2 percent. Since that time, the usage rate has shown a gradual increase, peaking this year at 73.8 percent. There was an increase of approximately 58 percentage points since the first survey was conducted in April 1985 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Front Seat Occupant Restraint Usage Rate
Comparison of Survey Results



Note: 1998 through 2002 surveys include pickup trucks, which tend to have lower usage rates.

Summary of Findings

Results of the safety belt survey conducted at 258 sites during June 2002 are summarized in Table 1. The first column of the table depicts the total number of front seat occupants observed and the second column shows the usage rate. The categories listed down the left side of the table indicate the various regions of the state where the survey was conducted (with the number of sites in each region in parenthesis), road types, time of day the survey was conducted, and a breakdown of weekdays and weekends. A total of 118,375 occupants were observed during the survey. Of those, 73.8 percent were wearing safety belts. The

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collar counties of DuPage, Will, Kane, McHenry, and Lake had the highest usage rate at 77.5 percent followed by downstate counties (Champaign, Macon, Rock Island, St. Clair, Montgomery and Peoria) at 73.9 percent. Cook County, excluding the City of Chicago, had a usage rate of 71.0 percent, and the City of Chicago had the lowest rate at 67.7 percent.

Table 1
Safety Belt Usage Rates in Illinois
(June 2002)

	Total Observed	Actual Usage Rate
Statewide (258)	**118,375**	**73.8**
Region		
City of Chicago (46)	25,917	67.7
Cook County (40)	15,041	71.0
Collar Counties (118)	53,524	77.5
Downstate (54)	23,893	73.9
Road Type		
Residential (190)	74,422	70.4
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	21,765	75.0
Interstate Highways (28)	24,188	83.1
Time of Day		
Morning Rush Hours (55)	23,422	72.5
Noon Rush Hours (45)	21,395	72.6
Evening Rush Hours (23)	10,400	74.0
Non-Rush Hours (135)	63,158	74.7
Day of Week		
Weekends (115)	55,600	74.7
Weekdays (143)	62,775	73.1

Interstate highways had the highest usage rate at 83.1 percent followed by U.S. and Illinois marked highways at 75.0 percent. Residential streets had the lowest rate at 70.4 percent. The non-rush hours had the highest usage rate at 74.7 followed by the evening rush hours (4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) of the day at 74.0 percent. The noon rush hours (11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) had a usage rate of 72.6 percent and the morning rush hours (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) had the lowest usage rate at 72.5 percent. The usage rate on weekends was slightly higher at 74.7 percent than the 73.1 percent on weekdays.

For more information, please contact:

Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Traffic Safety
3215 Executive Park Drive
P.O. Box 19245
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9245
(217) 785-1181
or TTY (217) 524-4875

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